

## Ministry Without Borders

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

When opposition arose in Thessalonica, Paul was forced to leave the city. He was deeply concerned about leaving the believers alone. So, motivated by his pastoral heart, he didn't just hope for the best. He didn't sit idly by and worry about these new Christians. He looked for indirect ways to strengthen the believers in that city. We could say that Paul believed in "*ministry without borders.*"

This reminds me that no matter what limitations we face, we can be creative in using the means at our disposal to build others up. Paul used three means to overcome the apparently insurmountable obstacles of distance and minister to his beloved Thessalonians.

### 1. Human means, 1-5

Paul decided to send Timothy back to Thessalonica (v. 2a). He is acting strategically to overcome the barrier of distance.

- How does verse 2 indicate that Timothy was the right person for Paul to send? To what extent would you say that you fulfill these criteria?
- Verse 2 briefly describes the purpose for Timothy's mission to Thessalonica. How could it guide your own interactions with other believers?
- In verse 5 we see Paul's deep concern for the Thessalonian believers. To what extent could you say that his attitude reflects your own heart toward others?

### 2. Written means, 6-8

Timothy met Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5) and gave him the good news that all was going well in Thessalonica. This filled the Apostle's heart with joy. His reaction was to overcome the insurmountable obstacle of distance by writing this letter that we are now studying.

- In verse 6 we see three things that awakened joy in Paul: the Thessalonians' (a) *faith*, (b) *love*, and (c) their *appreciation* toward him. Considering 3 John 4, how does your growth in these areas motivate and encourage your spiritual leaders? Why is this so important for the well-being of the church?
- Explain the meaning in v. 8 of the phrase, "*for now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.*" How can you apply this to your own life?

### 3. Prayer means, 9-13

The spiritual progress of the Thessalonians filled Paul with thanksgiving and rejoicing (v. 9) and motivated him to pray for them.

- What does it mean to pray "*most earnestly night and day*" (10).
- Explain Paul's prayer requests:
  - V. 10, "*that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.*"
  - V. 12, "*May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you.*"
  - V. 13, "*So that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.*"
- Do you pray for others in accordance with these requests?